

At the May 18, 2005, Congressional briefing on homeless veterans, we heard from Denise Randolph, a former homeless woman veteran. She explained that when she went to the VA to stay at the domiciliary she felt unsafe because the space was not set up to house women. VA experts confirmed that many VA domiciliary programs are not equipped to handle the privacy and safety needs of female veterans, although VA is addressing this problem. Given that more women are serving in our armed forces and those women veterans are at greater risk for homelessness, we must ensure that female veterans have access to safe VA programs. The bill would require the VA to enhance its capacity to provide safe domiciliary care for women veterans.

The VA has no specific programs to help community providers who focus on homeless veterans in rural and remote locations. This legislation would authorize special grants to community providers to meet the needs of homeless rural veterans.

Dental care has consistently been identified in the top five unmet needs of homeless veterans. The legislation expands homeless veterans' eligibility for dental services and treatment.

The legislation authorizes appropriations of \$1 million each year through 2011 to provide technical assistance grants to assist community providers in addressing the problems of homeless veterans.

The authorization for the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans expires on December 31, 2006. This committee has been very effective in assessing the effectiveness of VA policies, organizational structures and services to assist homeless veterans. The Committee has also been pivotal in identifying gaps in programs and barriers to addressing the needs of homeless veterans. The legislation reauthorizes the Committee through September 30, 2011. The legislation also clarifies that the Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, the VA Under Secretary for Health and VA Under Secretary for Benefits are ex-officio members of the Committee.

Helping transition homeless veterans is a complex and challenging effort that requires vigilance and coordination. A number of geographic regions of VA hospitals do not have full-time staff as Homeless Veterans Coordinators. My legislation requires each Veterans Integrated Service Network, known as VISNs, to have at least one full-time Homeless Veterans Coordinator.

Last August, our nation saw the destructive force of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The homeless shelters in New Orleans, like other structures, suffered damage from this disaster. The legislation would authorize the VA to make emergency grants to community shelters providing care for homeless veterans to repair or replace facilities that are damaged or destroyed by a disaster.

Homeless veterans with severe disabilities, including mental health disorders, need supportive services to maintain their functional lives. Linking permanent housing to supportive services is an effective way to end long-term homelessness for veterans who have mental health disorders, including substance abuse or other disabling conditions. According to the Corporation for Supportive Housing, providing supportive services to individuals in permanent housing reduces costly emergency room visits

by 57 percent, decreases inpatient hospital days by 58 percent and reduces use of public residential mental health programs by 100 percent. The VA's research has found that homeless veterans who have housing and supportive services can revive social networks and rebuild their family relationships.

My good friend and colleague from New Hampshire, Representative JEB BRADLEY, has introduced legislation to require the VA, in coordination with HUD, to provide financial assistance to non-profit organizations to coordinate the provision of supportive services for very low-income veterans residing in permanent housing. I support his bill and I have included a similar provision in my legislation.

In addition to providing the services at-risk veterans need to remain in permanent housing, we must also take steps to prevent homelessness. The legislation authorizes the VA to conduct a demonstration program, in at least three sites, to identify veterans who are at risk of becoming homeless after discharge or separation from the armed services and provide referral and counseling services to help prevent such veterans from becoming homeless.

The legislation makes permanent the successful pilot program to provide counseling and outreach to at-risk veterans who are transitioning from a penal institution or an institution that provides long-term care for mental illness.

The Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006 has the strong support of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America and the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

I urge my colleagues to support the Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006.

IN HONOR OF THE MONTEREY COUNTY FAIR

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Monterey County Fair on an outstanding 70 year tradition. During the week of August 15–20, 2006, the 7th District Agricultural Association's official County Fair will be enjoyed by both community residents and visitors with a theme of "That's Entertainment."

The Monterey County Fair promotes Monterey County's rich agricultural heritage with livestock demonstrations, displays and auctions to raise money for scholarships, including the participation of over 5,000 of Monterey County's youth through programs such as FFA and 4–H in festivities offered at the fair.

Exhibitors can choose from agriculture, horticulture and floriculture divisions for those with a green thumb, visual arts for the crafty and artistic, home arts for culinary whizzes and wine makers, and photography for camera buffs. Livestock categories include cattle, sheep, swine, rabbits, and poultry. These fun and friendly competitions are a chance to win both ribbons and prize money.

The Fair hosts Kids' Day, Seniors' Day, and Special Friends Day so that all children under age of twelve, all senior citizens living in Monterey County, and citizens of who are mentally or physically challenged can enjoy the fair.

The Monterey County Fair provides an excellent showcase of the unique, creative tal-

ents of the residents of Monterey County including crafts, fine art and photography. With over 200 categories for exhibitors to choose from, such opportunities increase self-esteem and community pride for all ages. This year they have added such innovative educational exhibits as a Living Food Pyramid that showcases local produce and teaches nutrition in a dynamic way, a Birthing Barn, Kid Tractor Pulls, a special new Kids Club, a Wild West Express Act, a special Street Rodder Car Show, and the all new Battle of the Bands.

The Monterey County Fair has launched a year-round Kid's Club to encourage Monterey County kids to learn more about the Monterey County Fair and get involved with many Fair activities year-round while having fun, such as the Read and Ride contest, coloring contest, and special Kids' Day activities.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Monterey County and all its citizens, I want to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Monterey County Fair, and wish them all the best on their 70th anniversary.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, because of a briefing in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I was absent for rollcall vote 414 on an amendment by Congressman TOWNS. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye".

HONORING MS. NORCELLA GIBSON FOR RECEIVING THE KINDRED SPIRIT AWARD

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 2006

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you to acknowledge the good deeds of a caring and compassionate woman who has been an effective advocate for defenseless animals. Ms. Norcella "Sally" Gibson is the creator of Lucky Cat Rescue, an organization established to save the lives of stray and feral cats.

Along with rescuing and re-homing over 250 cats each year, Ms. Gibson can add to her resume the Kindred Spirit Award from the Doris Day Foundation. The award is given to people who show extreme kindness and compassion to animals. By founding an organization that gives cats and kittens medical attention, foster care, proper diet, and loving homes, Sally Gibson was a first-rate candidate.

Sally, the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Pediatrics at the University of Maryland Hospital for Children, is known for her devotion to the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable, animals and children.

Lucky Cat Rescue takes in cats and kittens that are considered "unadoptable" by other shelters. In fact, these are the cats that would potentially be euthanized. Ms. Gibson maintains three feral cat colonies. She and other